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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS TOKYO; MOFA
COMMENTS ON COLLAPSE OF UNITY GOVERNMENT

REF: A. TOKYO 2555

[1](#)B. TOKYO 2663

[1](#)C. TOKYO 2692

Classified By: Ambassador J. T. Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Palestinian Foreign Minister Ziad Abu-Amr enjoyed a "positive, fruitful" visit to Tokyo June 11-13, according to MOFA contacts. FM Aso discussed the possibility of resuming direct assistance to the Palestinians through the Office of President Abbas, although a final decision had not been made. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed the Corridor of Peace and Prosperity (CPP) initiative; FM Aso hoped the locations for West Bank agro-industrial parks would be decided at a technical-level four-party meeting to be held on June 27. Japan remains interested in financing upgrades to the Gaza Coastal Road when the security situation in Gaza improves. Asked for help building the capacity of the Palestinian security services, Aso explained Japan could only offer training for border guards and customs/immigration officials. Abu-Amr asserted that the national unity government programs comply with the Quartet conditions for recognition, and complained about Israel's failure to remit Palestinian tax revenues. He noted his personal concerns about Iranian activities. However, since the collapse of the unity government, Japan questions whether even Hamas knows what it is trying to accomplish. Tokyo also questions Egypt's role in what has transpired, asserting that the funds and arms that made the Hamas military victory possible were smuggled through tunnels from Egypt. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Palestinian FM Abu-Amr visited Tokyo June 11-13 at the invitation of FM Aso for "political consultation" meetings. The two held a forty-five minute meeting June 12, followed by a 30 minute one-on-one, followed by a dinner. Aso's main message to Abu-Amr was to stress that Japan strongly supports efforts by President Abbas to achieve peace with Israel. MOFA First Middle East Division Palestine officer Mamoru

Kanno told Embassy Tokyo political officer June 14 that the visit was "fruitful and positive" and reaffirmed Japan's view that Abu-Amr is a moderate, independent, neutral personality.

He engaged with his hosts in a low-key, intellectual manner, rather than with a confrontational, aggressive style, said Kanno, who added that Abu-Amr seems to understand well the attitude of the international community toward Palestine. Besides Abu-Amr, the Palestinian delegation consisted of Majdi al-Khalidi, foreign policy advisor to President Abbas, Muhannad Hammouri, Palestinian chief of protocol, Waleed Siam, Palestine's representative in Tokyo, and two of Siam's staff. FM Aso was accompanied by Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process Tatsuo Arima, MOFA Director General for Middle Eastern and African Affairs Norihiro Okuda, Director General for International Cooperation Koro Bessho, First Middle East Division Director Hideo Sato, and Policy Planning Bureau Senior Policy Coordinator Masahiro Takasugi.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE THE MAIN POINT

¶3. (C) The main discussion topic of the meetings was the possibility of resuming direct assistance to the Palestinians. As previewed ref A, FM Aso explained to Abu-Amr that Japan is interested in resuming such aid but in a manner which will assure funds do not wind up in the hands of Hamas or are otherwise misdirected toward the support of terrorist activities. Accordingly, Tokyo is exploring methods by which it can transmit such assistance directly to the Office of President Abbas. Japan's goal is to signal its strong support for Abbas and his moderate approach. Kanno explained that while the Japanese have complete faith in

Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad, they are concerned that should the government collapse or Fayyad be replaced, any funds given to his ministry would be used for purposes not originally intended. (Note: As it turned out, Japanese fears of a government collapse were well founded.)

¶4. (C) Kanno said Japan understands the United States has been speaking to Fayyad about making use of the Single Treasury Account and noted that several other countries, including Norway, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait, have already contributed. However, he underlined, Japan is still considering whether to contribute and has not yet decided to resume direct assistance to the Palestinians. He expects a decision to be made within the next few months, and pointed out that MOFA's International Cooperation Bureau and the Ministry of Finance will have to be involved in this process.

¶5. (C) FM Abu-Amr did not raise with FM Aso the issue of the UNRWA flash appeal, nor was the situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon discussed (ref B.)

CORRIDOR OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

¶6. (C) Technical-level four-party talks on the (Corridor of Peace and Prosperity) CPP are scheduled to take place June 27 on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea, FM Aso confirmed to Abu-Amr. It is Japan's hope that the final sites for the CPP's agro-industrial parks - most likely in the Jericho region - can be decided upon at that time. Aso also told Abu-Amr that Japan is prepared to provide \$1.3 million through the UNDP to help rehabilitate the Jericho-El Taybeh road to better facilitate the transport of people and commodities. Japan is waiting to receive an official project proposal from the UNDP, and understands it is currently with the Palestinians for review. First Middle East Division Director Sato told political officer he hopes the talks will take place as scheduled despite the collapse of the unity government.

GAZA COASTAL ROAD

¶17. (C) The Palestinians have been hopeful that the Japanese will also help fund upgrades to the Gaza Coast Road, and Abu-Amr raised this topic with Aso, Kanno reported. Tokyo realizes that this is an important project for President Abbas and has a strong interest in offering support. However, the current security situation in Gaza precludes any Japanese assistance for this project at this time. Kanno said that Abu-Amr appreciates Japan's position and understands the concerns. Kanno predicted (even before the collapse) that it will be a long time before the situation in Gaza improves to the point where Japan can give serious consideration to the road project.

CAPACITY BUILDING

¶18. (C) Abu-Amr also asked Aso for help building capacity at the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically mentioning the need for computers and office facilities, said Kanno. Aso replied Japan is not in a position to provide material assistance, but may be able to offer training for computer specialists to help keep the Ministry's systems operating.

¶19. (C) On the subject of assistance for Palestinian security forces, Aso explained to Abu-Amr it is not possible for Japan to provide weapons, ammunition, or other material support. However, as with the previous request, Japan may be able to provide training for Palestinian border, customs, and immigration authorities. No agreements or commitments on this subject were finalized between the two sides.

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

¶110. (C) Abu-Amr briefed Aso on the formation of the national unity government and maintained that both its composition and program should have been satisfactory to gain recognition from the Quartet. Aso responded that Japan and others are closely watching the behavior of the unity government and that it is up to the Palestinians, through their actions, to strengthen their own credibility with the international community. He recommended that the Palestinian Authority explicitly and clearly make known that its policy is to work for peaceful coexistence and coprosperity with the Israelis. Abu-Amr acknowledged that this was not done when the unity government was first formed. But he stressed that the unity government is not a Hamas government, and that it is committed to a two state solution and accepts the Oslo Process and other prior PLO/Israeli agreements. He conceded, however, that he understands this point must be made much clearer. (For a more detailed discussion of Abu-Amr's arguments on these points see ref C.)

¶111. (C) Abu-Amr also complained about Israel's refusal to release Palestinian tax revenues, arguing that this policy was depriving the Palestinians of badly needed funds and exacerbating the economic "siege" that is responsible for fueling increased intra-Palestinian violence. According to Kanno, Aso replied that Japan supports the Palestinians on this and has made known to Israel its view that there is no justification for the withholding of the funds and that they should be released.

THE ROLE OF IRAN

¶112. (C) Speaking "unofficially and on a personal basis," Abu-Amr told Aso he is concerned about the role being played by Iran in the peace process. He said he believes Iran is intervening in Palestine's internal affairs and must stop supporting Hamas with weapons and ammunition. While he would be happy to accept Iranian funds to assist the Palestinian

people, he asserted that the last thing needed was more guns.

He told Aso he would be raising this with the Iranians when he visits Tehran on his return trip home. Aso replied that Japan shares his view that Iran's activities in the Middle East must be "constructive" and their engagement must be designed to achieve stability, rather than intended to cause turmoil.

JAPAN'S VIEW ON COLLAPSE OF UNITY GOVERNMENT

¶13. (C) Following the collapse of the unity government June 15, political officer spoke with First Middle East Division Director Sato to elicit Japan's views. Sato said Japan can't tell what the intentions of Hamas are, and questions whether they even know this themselves. "If they are so blind that they can't see where they're going it will be very hard for us or anyone to deal with them. They cannot hope to establish their own 'Hamasland' in Gaza without the support of the international community other than a few rogue states." Sato also questioned the role of Egypt in all of this. He believes all the funds and weapons Hamas smuggled in to enable their military victory came through tunnels from Egypt, and he asked rhetorically why Cairo can't control this. He also noted that despite Cairo's claims it has been working to free the Israeli soldier and calm the situation there doesn't seem to be any progress or success Egypt can point to. He speculated that perhaps Cairo is trying to regain the "strategic center" after it had recently appeared to shift to Riyadh. Sato also questioned what Abbas will do. If he resigns, said Sato, no one will be in charge. If he calls for new elections, how will they be conducted, and what will happen if Fatah is decisively defeated?

¶14. (C) As for Japan's engagement, Sato says he is hopeful the June 27 meeting to discuss the CPP will go ahead as planned, noting that the Palestinian participants have already been identified and are all expert-level people who work with Saeb Erekat. However, MOFA is urging the postponement of a planned International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East scheduled to be held in Tokyo at the United Nations University on June 26, organized by the UN Department of Information. He said it is likely most Palestinian participants will cancel and, in addition, noted that as the purpose of the seminar is to foster confidence building, it is unlikely to be successful given the heightened tensions of the moment.

SCHIEFFER